



## Mihai Diac, the Green Bridge between forest and community



**The founder and passionate developer of the Codrii Iașilor project and civic group.**

Why is he our focus today? Because his face lights up when he speaks about the natural forest, because his eyes sparkle when he tells us about the animals and plants found deep down in the woods.

Who is he? A simple citizen of Iasi (Romania) with a deep care for the environment who managed to bring together thousands of nature lovers for the same goal: to establish a natural park around a busy and crowded city, just 11 km away from the city centre.

The starting point was when he realized, while walking through the Bucium forest as he usually does with his family, that ancient remarkable trees were being marked for cutting. The second day he saw a great common oak (Lat: *Quercus petraea*) on the ground, dragged to a forestry platform, the same tree he photographed standing just a day before. The oak's trunk had more than 130cm in diameter, more than 250 growth rings, so it must have started growing in the 1800s. Mihai couldn't conceive such rare and marvellous specimens, who stand testimony to the passing of time in such a perishable modern world being destroyed, as these arbours can live more than 1000 years. That moment he decided he can't stay aside and must do something.

He founded a Facebook group together with two friends entitled *Codrii Iasilor – Cunoastem, Pretuim, Pastram* (en. *The Woods of Iasi – We know, we cherish, we protect*) (end of 2018) which now totals over 16,500 members and 21,000 followers. He underlines people around the city of Iasi must learn more about the treasure just south of their city, they must cherish the things they know and learn how to keep and take care of the remarkable trees of the old parcels. As reported by Mr. Diac, 99% of the forests which surround the city of Iasi (i.e. 15,000 ha) are recorded with the Forest Division of Iasi as wood good to be cut solely for production. Only 1% is protected which is far less than needed by such a large community as the Metropolitan Area of Iasi.



According to [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Area_of_Iasi) (retrieved on October 2021) the Metropolitan Area of Iasi is a metropolitan association in Iași County, Romania, that includes the municipality of Iași and 19 nearby communes. It has a total surface of 1,159 km<sup>2</sup> of the 5,476 km<sup>2</sup> that the county has, and a population of 403,572 inhabitants out of the 772,348 in the county.

*Codrii Iasilor* group has gathered biologists, wildlife photographers, nature specialists and simple nature lovers who became involved and contributed to the online growth of awareness on the natural treasure that surrounds us. They have revealed wonderful places, beautiful flora and fauna that the inhabitants of Iasi did not even know existed so close to their town. The online community brought to light endangered plants and animals, species which were thought to be extinct in our areas (i.e. the golden jackal<sup>1</sup>), new species at a national level (*Epipactis leptochila*), and fascinating ecosystems of great beauty. With these arguments, as forestry continued cutting remarkable trees, Mihai Diac started to look for support at national level and NGOs came with expertise and helped taking the case to Court and won in July 2021 the first decision against Romsilva (The National Romanian Department of Forests) and the Ministry of Environment, forcing them to stop the wood production cuts in the area.

*Codrii Iasilor* group, besides information, also created a **culture** of protection and cherishing towards nature as well as an **attitude** of individual involvement and responsibility for the environment.. They teach people how to reconnect with nature again and keep what we already have. They offer pieces of advice regarding trails, walks in the woods and safety. The hashtag #FapteNuLamentari (*en. #FactsNotComplaints*) was created to encourage the group members to actively involve if they identify illegal forestry or other environment felonies. They use another hashtag, #FlorilorLeStaBineInNatura (*en. #FlowersArePrettierInNature*), for educating people to leave the flowers in their natural environment, even if they are beautiful, in order to protect not just the endangered species, but also the common ones when faced by the potential of mass tourism.



**From national to international NGO collaborations.** For a better initiative and support, Mihai Diac has started to collaborate with national activist NGOs Agent Green, Brigada Verde and Greenpeace Romania, directly connected with Greenpeace International. They all brought the support and awareness the cause has needed. The petition entitled *Protect the Woods of Iași by creating a Natural Park* (#ParcNaturalCodriiIasilor) launched in 2021 has been signed by more than 22,000 people and Mr. Diac would like to hand

it over when it will have 50,000 signatures. After the complex event on September 30 - October 3, 2021 organized together with Greenpeace Romania, the numbers will certainly increase with the additional awareness. This event has brought the cause to light, many inhabitants of Iasi have found out about the existing group and their activities along the tracks or for the trails. People have enjoyed good music, relaxed walks through and near the forest on newly created thematic routes, informed guided tours and pleasant organizers in a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caNzxM7v7EU>

formerly neglected place where people were going on their own with no guidance and introduction.

As a consequence, let's follow Mihai Diac's advice and '*Become involved for the nature close, #FactsNotComplaints*': sign the petition below for a better air and a greener life in a cluttered city <https://campaniamea.declie.ro/petitions/salvati-codrii-seculari-ai-iasiului-1>